



STEP 2

ESTABLISH COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Successful dental sealant programs have several common elements:

- 1) **Small local beginnings**
- 2) **An involved advisory group**
- 3) **Planning viewed as a learning process**
- 4) **Links to a network of leaders and agencies with commitment to improving the health of children.**

BUILD SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM

Begin Local, Begin Small, and Go Slow

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professions, businesses, schools, and consumers. An involved advisory group insures support of the program. Seek members from various sectors of the community to increase the chances of maintaining a diversified, yet, interested membership. Invitations to participate on the advisory group may be extended to members of the following communities:

^ **Oral Health Providers**

The Oral Health Provider community includes dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, denturists, and dental laboratory technicians as well as personnel who operate oral health programs in the state or county. Not-for-profit dental services such as, neighborhood, community, migrant, and tribal dental clinics, and for-profit dental, dental hygiene, and other oral health-related services are part of this group. Networking with various providers strengthens the program in many ways.

^ **Schools**

The School community includes superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, librarians, school nurses, and supportive personnel who work directly for a school or



school district, either public or private. Children and their parents, who are the recipients of the services, are part of this group. The school community must be an active participant in the decision-making process of dental sealant programs.

^ Health Professionals

Pediatricians, family physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, naturopaths, dietitians, members of Board of Health, county commissioners, nutritionists, hospital personnel and insurance carriers can be vital links to the successful marketing and promotion of dental disease prevention programs. Seek to educate and involve representatives from interested and willing providers.

^ Businesses

Inappropriate decision-making and insufficient funding can eliminate a well-planned and valuable service to the community. Extend advisory membership invitations to business, corporate bodies, labor, and philanthropic organizations. Partnerships with the business and labor community provide opportunities for education, financial support, and advocacy for the program.

INVOLVE ADVISORY GROUP IN PLANNING AND LEARNING


Invited advisory group members need a voice in the program-planning phase. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of each member. Establish informal rules about when to call meetings, how to conduct meetings, how to record progress, and how decisions will be made. Ask members to help shape, change, and critique the plan. Keeps the planning focused on community needs and maintain flexibility as the program evolves and grows. Each group may have a different role to play. The following is a description of what each group may contribute. When you meet with them solicit more ideas.

^ Oral Health Providers

Meet with local oral health provider groups. In addition to sharing information about program goals, providers will want to know what is happening in their community. If they are interested in technical information about sealant materials, typical retention rates in community based programs, criteria for sealing over caries, quality assurance measures, portable equipment, infection control safety and efficacy of sealants, or follow-up protocols, you will have an opportunity to provide that information. Prepare a notebook of scientific articles about effectiveness and efficacy of dental sealants for caries prevention as the foundation for your decision to implement a program. This group can be instrumental in brainstorming ideas for recruitment of staff. They can assist in gathering professional support for the program.

^ Schools

The school community must weigh the value of a dental sealant program against the value of time spent in the classroom. If this is your initial relationship with school personnel, focus the first meeting on the benefits of dental sealants. Convince the



audience that the program is worth the time in the school day. Emphasize the long-term value and cost-benefits of a child with healthy teeth. Help them understand the costly effects over time of surgical or reparative therapies.

Approaches to consider:

Provide Information

Provide each school with an **information packet** which contains the program goals and objectives. Include samples such as consent forms, scheduling forms, classroom incentive ideas, and sealant educational material.

Gain Approval

Depending upon the district decision making structure, a superintendent may endorse the program for an entire system or may leave the final decision about participation to each individual principal. It is more efficient if the superintendent endorses the program for the entire system. Suggest that approach. If the superintendent is undecided, solicit assistance from your advisory group. School nurses are a useful first contact because they have direct knowledge of the decision-making hierarchy within the school. Because decisions for endorsing sealant programs may be lengthy, consider the approval process timeline in your planning. The approval process may take a considerable amount of direct contact with local leaders, oral healthcare providers, support groups, and school personnel. Patience with persistence is essential.

Build A Relationship


Once the program is approved, the sealant program administrator needs to determine the most appropriate way to involve the superintendent in gaining acceptance for the program in each school. Aside from the school principal there may be directors of student services or special services to support the program with the school staff.

Identify Partners

Enthusiastic teachers, nurses, or parents can help gain acceptance within the schools. Volunteers within the school may be interested in assisting with the coordination of obtaining parental consents for participation in the sealant program. Identify the enthusiastic supporters and foster their involvement.

^ Health Professionals

Health professionals who work with children and their families will be interested in learning about the sealant program. As knowledge expands about the underlying associations between oral health and general health, greater awareness of the importance of oral health will emerge. By working with the health community, the



sealant program can become another link toward dental disease prevention and oral health and general health promotion.

^ Businesses

Dental sealants are a proven dental caries prevention technology. It is important for the business community to understand that if this disease is prevented at its earliest sign, more costly care can be avoided. Endorsements of the dental sealant program by organization such as United Way, Kiwanis, Lions Clubs, YWCA, YMCA, Boy and Girl Scouts, local businesses, and from well respected members of the political business, regulatory and philanthropic organizations may provide opportunities for funding and sharing sponsorship of the dental sealant program. Work with media to inform the community of the benefits of early prevention and the value of a sealant program.

LINK DENTAL SEALANT PROGRAM TO NETWORK OF LEADERS

Once you have planned and implemented a small, local and successful dental sealant program in one community, plan to augment the program in neighboring school districts or communities. Draw on the talents of your original advisory committee for their expertise in identifying leaders in the proposed new sites. If the communities are very diverse, create another local advisory groups who can commitment to improving the health of children. Each group will learn the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating dental sealant programs. As community advocates for children s health emerge from your advisory groups, link with them and any organizations with which they may be associated. In this way, support and knowledge of the sealant program will grow quickly.

Gaining community support is an important component in the development of a community or school-based dental sealant program. Starting local, starting small, and building collaborative and functional partnerships with oral health providers, school personnel health, and business communities will ensure successful programs targeted to children who need preventive services.

As part of the establishment of an infrastructure, learn about billing procedures. To receive a Medicaid provider application, contact Provider Enrollment P.O.Box 45562, Olympia, Washington 98504-5562. A sample application FOLLOWS THIS STEP. In Washington State both dentist and dental hygienists are assigned provider numbers and are able to bill. In 1999, the reimbursement for the placement of a sealant is \$22.22.

Medicaid also funds outreach by providing MATCH dollars to those agencies providing outreach to Medicaid clients. For more information on this contact your local health jurisdiction financial officer.

To learn about proper private insurance billing, contact the insurer directly.